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10/770,423

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Mike Soumokil

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EXAMINER

SAEED, USMAAN

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

2166

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

01/08/2008

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/770,423

Applicant(s)

SOUMOKIL ET AL.

Examiner

Usmaan Saeed

Art Unit

2166

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 27 September 2007.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,5-8,10,12-14,16,18-20,22,24,25,28 and 29 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,5-8,10,12-14,16,18-20,22,24,25,28 and 29 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 04 February 2006 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Amendment

Receipt of Applicant's Amendment, filed 09/27/2007 is acknowledged.

Claims 1, 6, 8, 14, 20, and 28 have been amended and claim 4 has been cancelled.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

In view of the amendments provided on 09/27/2007, the 35 USC 101 rejections are hereby withdrawn.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

Claims 1, 8, 14, and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. "Displaying the workflow on a display" is not described in the specification. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and

the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 1, 6-8, 10, 12-14, 16, 18-20, 22, 24-25 and 28-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Ludwig et al.** (**Ludwig** hereinafter) (U.S. PG Pub No. 2003/0004874) in view of **Falk et al.** (**Falk** hereinafter) (U. S. PG Pub No. 2004/0111302).

With respect to claim 1, **Ludwig** teaches "**A computer readable storage medium for storing an electronic data record, of an invoice, the electronic data record comprising**" as the system may allow data to be entered for the following exemplary fields, which the system may be adapted to store as global information on the database: name, address, city, state, zip, country, phone, number, fax number, and maximum invoice amount allowed. The system may use the maximum invoice amount

allowed field to establish a threshold for a maximum payment for a single invoice (Ludwig Paragraph 0075).

“a data field for identification of a current state of the processing of the invoice wherein the current state is assigned by a user” as "Paid Through Another Source" may be provided by the system as an option for the biller system user to mark an invoice as closed by selecting desired invoices and clicking on the "Paid through another source" button. Once this occurs, the system may, for the invoices in question, update their audit trail to reflect that they were paid outside the system, and then change their status to closed (Ludwig Paragraph 0091 & 0130). Therefore the user is entering the current state "closed" by clicking on the button. Therefore the identification of the current invoice is that it is paid and closed.

Further Ludwig teaches the filter area, the system may provide the following exemplary choices: by date (past due, eligible for discount, due within xxx days); and by status (paid invoices, adjusted invoices, unpaid invoices, paid through another source); and by payer (all payer, specific payer); and by attribute range between xxx and yyy (none, invoice numbers, store/location, purchase orders, purchase request number, invoice issue dates, dollar amount, bill of lading numbers, receiving location zipcodes, invoice aging) (Ludwig Paragraph 0080). These lines also teach the identification of the current state of the processing of the invoice.

“the data field is used for starting a workflow which depends on the current state” as figures 6a-6c (Ludwig Figures 6a-6c). Figures 9a-9b teach a state dependent

workflow for the payment of an invoice. Figure 7c teaches a state dependent workflow for adjustment of invoices.

In figures 9a and 9b, the workflow for the payment is being initiated which is being dependent on the current state of the invoice, which is that the invoice is pending or due.

“wherein the data field has a link to a table” as the system may link the status field to the invoice history page, at which the system may display a full status history for the selected invoice. By default, the system may display the following exemplary columns: payer name, invoice number, due date, status, net amount due, amount to pay, P.O. number, P.O. requisition number, store number, and select (Ludwig Paragraph 0092).

“an instruction which depend on the current state and are automatically executable by a computer system” as (Ludwig Paragraph 0091 and 0045). In paragraph 0045 email notices are being sent automatically based on the current state of the invoice.

Ludwig teaches the elements of claim 1 as noted above but does not explicitly discloses, **“a state value table comprising the current state, and the state value table comprises an instruction which depend on the current state and are automatically executable by a computer system, and the workflow is displayed on a display to the user.”**

However, Falk discloses, **“a state value table comprising the current state, and the state value table comprises an instruction which depend on the current**

state and are automatically executable by a computer system, and the workflow is displayed on a display to the user” as the main purposes of the workflow table is to allow the system to determine the next workflow state for a transactional folder based on its current state and the completion of a given application function that alters that folder--i.e., the workflow state transition (**Falk** Paragraph 0589 and Figure 24). In addition to defining workflow state transitions, the workflow table implicitly defines workflow navigation as well. For any given transactional folder in a given state, the workflow table will define the application functions that are allowed to be performed in this state (**Falk** Paragraph 0591). Workflow state transitions are simple and deterministic--the next workflow state is determined simply by the current workflow state and the application function that was completed. However, in some cases, the transition can only be determined by inspecting other data elements within the transactional folder (**Falk** Paragraph 0603). Examiner interprets the workflow table as state value table comprising the current state. Workflow table/state value table further comprises executable functions that are allowed to be performed based on the current state.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the teaching of the cited references because **Falk's** teaching would have allowed **Ludwig** to provide an automated system with the following capabilities unique to inter-organizational business transaction processing: 1) a centralized network hub (web-based) that facilitates the inter-connection of various organizations and eliminates the proliferation of point-to-point interfaces, 2) an inter-

organizational workflow management system that provides a common framework for managing the state and status of all transactions within the system, 3) an inter-organizational transaction processing component that supports multiple organizations and their distinct relationship with each transaction while also ensuring the security and privacy of each organization's data, 4) a unified data model mechanism that allows common data elements to be exchanged while also supporting organization specific interface requirements, and 5) application specific data and functionality specific to the types of business transactions being processed.

With respect to claim 6, **Ludwig** teaches **“the computer readable storage medium for storing electronic data record of claim 1, wherein the electronic data record is at least partially accessible via the Internet and wherein the content of the data field for the current state or a data field for comments is editable via the Internet”** as the system may permit information to be maintained and edited at this page, which the system may store as global information on the database (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0064). The present invention may be appropriately adapted to include such communication functionality and Internet browsing ability (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0157).

With respect to claim 7, **Ludwig** teaches **“the computer readable storage medium for storing electronic data record of claim 1, wherein the state value table comprises one or more state dependent proposals for changing the current state”** as the system may, for the invoices in question, update their audit trail to reflect

that they were paid outside the system, and then change their status to "Closed" (Ludwig Paragraph 0091 & Figure 9a). Figure 9a shows invoice status list reference numeral 909.

Ludwig teaches the elements of claim 7 as noted above but does not explicitly disclose, **"the state value table."**

However, Falk discloses, **"the state value table"** as the main purposes of the workflow table is to allow the system to determine the next workflow state for a transactional folder based on its current state and the completion of a given application function that alters that folder--i.e., the workflow state transition (Falk Paragraph 0589 and Figure 24). Examiner interprets the workflow table as state value table comprising the current state.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the teaching of the cited references because Falk's teaching would have allowed Ludwig to provide an automated system with the following capabilities unique to inter-organizational business transaction processing: 1) a centralized network hub (web-based) that facilitates the inter-connection of various organizations and eliminates the proliferation of point-to-point interfaces, 2) an inter-organizational workflow management system that provides a common framework for managing the state and status of all transactions within the system, 3) an inter-organizational transaction processing component that supports multiple organizations and their distinct relationship with each transaction while also ensuring the security and privacy of each organization's data, 4) a unified data model mechanism that allows

common data elements to be exchanged while also supporting organization specific interface requirements, and 5) application specific data and functionality specific to the types of business transactions being processed.

With respect to claim 8, **Ludwig** teaches “**a method for processing an electronic data record of an invoice, the electronic data record**” as the system may allow data to be entered for the following exemplary fields, which the system may be adapted to store as global information on the database: name, address, city, state, zip, country, phone, number, fax number, and maximum invoice amount allowed. The system may use the maximum invoice amount allowed field to establish a threshold for a maximum payment for a single invoice (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0075) “**comprising a data field for identification of a current state of the processing of the invoice, the method comprising**” as “Paid Through Another Source” may be provided by the system as an option for the biller system user to mark an invoice as closed by selecting desired invoices and clicking on the “Paid through another source” button. Once this occurs, the system may, for the invoices in question, update their audit trail to reflect that they were paid outside the system, and then change their status to closed (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0091 & 0130). Therefore the user is entering the state “closed” by clicking on the button. Therefore the identification of the current invoice is that it is paid and closed.

Further, **Ludwig** teaches the filter area, the system may provide the following exemplary choices: by date (past due, eligible for discount, due within xxx days); and by

status (paid invoices, adjusted invoices, unpaid invoices, paid through another source); and by payer (all payer, specific payer); and by attribute range between xxx and yyy (none, invoice numbers, store/location, purchase orders, purchase request number, invoice issue dates, dollar amount, bill of lading numbers, receiving location zipcodes, invoice aging) (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0080). These lines also teach the identification of the current state of the processing of the invoice.

“displaying a dialogue for enabling the current state to be entered by a user and assigning the current state entered by the user to the data field” as "Paid Through Another Source" may be provided by the system as an option for the biller system user to mark an invoice as closed by selecting desired invoices and clicking on the "Paid through another source" button. Once this occurs, the system may, for the invoices in question, update their audit trail to reflect that they were paid outside the system, and then change their status to closed (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0091 & 0130). Therefore the user is entering the state “closed” by clicking on the button. Therefore the identification of the current invoice is that it is paid and closed.

“wherein the data field has a link to a table” as the system may link the status field to the invoice history page, at which the system may display a full status history for the selected invoice. By default, the system may display the following exemplary columns: payer name, invoice number, due date, status, net amount due, amount to pay, P.O. number, P.O. requisition number, store number, and select (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0092).

“an instruction which depend on the current state and are automatically executable by a computer system” as (Ludwig Paragraph 0091 and 0045). In paragraph 0045 email notices are being sent automatically based on the current state of the invoice.

“starting a workflow which depends on the current state” as figures 6a-6c (Ludwig Figures 6a-6c). Figures 9a-9b teach a state dependent workflow for the payment of an invoice. Figure 7c teaches a state dependent workflow for adjustment of invoices.

In figures 9a and 9b, the workflow for the payment is being initiated which is being dependent on the current state of the invoice, which is that the invoice is pending or due.

Ludwig teaches the elements of claim 8 as noted above but does not explicitly disclose, **“a state value table comprising the current state, and the state value table comprises an instruction which depend on the current state and are automatically executable by a computer system, and displaying the workflow on a display to the user.”**

However, Falk discloses, **“a state value table comprising the current state, and the state value table comprises an instruction which depend on the current state and are automatically executable by a computer system, and the workflow is displayed on a display to the user”** as the main purposes of the workflow table is to allow the system to determine the next workflow state for a transactional folder based on its current state and the completion of a given application function that alters that

folder--i.e., the workflow state transition (**Falk** Paragraph 0589 and Figure 24). In addition to defining workflow state transitions, the workflow table implicitly defines workflow navigation as well. For any given transactional folder in a given state, the workflow table will define the application functions that are allowed to be performed in this state (**Falk** Paragraph 0591). Workflow state transitions are simple and deterministic--the next workflow state is determined simply by the current workflow state and the application function that was completed. However, in some cases, the transition can only be determined by inspecting other data elements within the transactional folder (**Falk** Paragraph 0603). Examiner interprets the workflow table as state value table comprising the current state. Workflow table/state value table further comprises executable functions that are allowed to be performed based on the current state.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the teaching of the cited references because **Falk's** teaching would have allowed **Ludwig** to provide an automated system with the following capabilities unique to inter-organizational business transaction processing: 1) a centralized network hub (web-based) that facilitates the inter-connection of various organizations and eliminates the proliferation of point-to-point interfaces, 2) an inter-organizational workflow management system that provides a common framework for managing the state and status of all transactions within the system, 3) an inter-organizational transaction processing component that supports multiple organizations and their distinct relationship with each transaction while also ensuring the security and

privacy of each organization's data, 4) a unified data model mechanism that allows common data elements to be exchanged while also supporting organization specific interface requirements, and 5) application specific data and functionality specific to the types of business transactions being processed.

With respect to claim 10, **Ludwig** teaches **“the method of claim 8, further comprising: performing at least one of selecting, sorting, evaluating, and analyzing the electronic invoice according to the current state”** as the system may provide a sort area to allow returned results to be sorted in ascending or descending order according to the following exemplary criteria: due date, invoice number, invoice date, purchase order number, net amount due, store or location number, and invoice aging (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0080).

With respect to claim 12, **Ludwig** teaches **“wherein the current state is selectable by the user according to predefinable events”** as in this section, the system may permit biller system users to be associated with specific system events, which associations the system may be adapted to store as global information on the database. Any time one of these specific events occurs, the system may generate an automatic e-mail and send it to the selected list of biller system users. For example, exemplary distribution list choices may include: invoices loaded successfully, invoices loaded unsuccessfully, invoice adjusted, payment authorized, payment canceled, payment completed, and payment notification (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0104). The system

may only permit invoices with the status of "paid", "presented", or "viewed" to be closed. All other invoice states may indicate payer workflow is in progress, and the system may not permit invoices having such states to be closed (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0105).

The system may permit a biller system user to select an option 605 to display invoices based on selected criteria and/or specify general search criteria for listing invoices. Depending on the selection, the system may direct the user to a "view options" page 606 for filtering and sorting (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0080).

With respect to claim 13, **Ludwig** teaches **"the method of claim 8, wherein the method is for use in business software, particularly in an enterprise resource planning software"** as the business service provider system 16 may be an exchange or other service bureau application providing a plurality of business processing services to its clients (which may include the biller system 12 and/or payer system 14). One such business processing service may be electronic bill presentment and payment, as may be provided using a system and/or method consistent with the invention (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0027).

Group of claims 14, 16, 18-19 and 20, 22, 24-25 are essentially the same as group of claims 8, 10, and 12-13 except they set forth the claimed invention as system and a computer-readable medium comprising instructions and are rejected for the same reasons as applied hereinabove.

With respect to claim 28, **Ludwig** teaches “**an electronic data structure for an electronic data record according to any one of claims 1 and 3-7**” as the exemplary embodiments of the system of the present invention described herein may be embodied as one or more distributed computer program processes, data structures (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0156).

Claim 29 is essentially the same as claim 13 except it sets forth the claimed invention as an electronic data structure and is rejected for the same reason as applied hereinabove.

Claims 3 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Ludwig et al.** (U.S. PG Pub No. 2003/0004874) in view of **Falk et al.** (U. S. PG Pub No. 2004/0111302) as applied to claims 1, 6-8, 10, 12-14, 16, 18-20, 22, 24-25 and 28-29 above further in view of **Haseltine et al.** (**Haseltine** hereinafter) (U. S. Patent No. 6,578,015).

With respect to claim 3, **Ludwig** teaches “**the computer readable storage medium for storing electronic data record of claim 1, wherein the state value table comprises a description of the current state**” as the system may link the status field to the invoice history page, at which the system may display a full status history for the selected invoice. By default, the system may display the following exemplary columns:

payer name, invoice number, due date, status, net amount due, amount to pay, P.O. number, P.O. requisition number, store number, and select (**Ludwig** Paragraph 0092).

Ludwig teaches the elements of claim 3 as noted above but does not explicitly disclose, “**wherein the state value table comprises a description of the current state.**”

However, **Haseltine** discloses, “**wherein the state value table comprises a description of the current state**” as a status table may be generated for the bill to indicate the current status of the bill (**Haseltine** Col 3, Lines 41-43).

Status tables 436 may also maintained in the active area 430 and may be viewed by customers. As the name implies, the status tables 436 track the status of the bills presented to the customers in the active area 430. For example, the status tables 436 may track whether a customer's bills have been viewed, paid, have been submitted or are pending. Other indicia indicative of the status of the customers' bills may also be included in the status tables 436 (**Haseltine** Col 6, Lines 11-20).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the teaching of the cited references because **Haseltine's** teaching would have allowed **Ludwig and Falk** to allow customers to view and pay electronic bills in a flexible manner without the involvement of paper bill and checks.

With respect to claim 5, **Ludwig** teaches “**the computer readable storage medium for storing electronic data record of claim 1, wherein the state value table**

comprises an assignment of the current state to an event which can occur during the processing of the invoice" as in this section, the system may permit biller system users to be associated with specific system events, which associations the system may be adapted to store as global information on the database. Any time one of these specific events occurs, the system may generate an automatic e-mail and send it to the selected list of biller system users. For example, exemplary distribution list choices may include: invoices loaded successfully, invoices loaded unsuccessfully, invoice adjusted, payment authorized, payment canceled, payment completed, and payment notification (**Ludwig Paragraph 0104**). The system may only permit invoices with the status of "paid", "presented", or "viewed" to be closed. All other invoice states may indicate payer workflow is in progress, and the system may not permit invoices having such states to be closed (**Ludwig Paragraph 0105**).

Ludwig teaches the elements of claim 5 as noted above but does not explicitly disclose, **"the state value table comprises an assignment of the current state."**

However, **Haseltine** discloses, **"the state value table comprises an assignment of the current state"** as a status table may be generated for the bill to indicate the current status of the bill (**Haseltine Col 3, Lines 41-43**). Status tables 436 may also maintained in the active area 430 and may be viewed by customers. As the name implies, the status tables 436 track the status of the bills presented to the customers in the active area 430. For example, the status tables 436 may track whether a customer's bills have been viewed, paid, have been submitted or are

pending. Other indicia indicative of the status of the customers' bills may also be included in the status tables 436 (**Haseltine** Col 6, Lines 11-20).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the teaching of the cited references because **Haseltine's** teaching would have allowed **Ludwig and Falk** to allow customers to view and pay electronic bills in a flexible manner without the involvement of paper bill and checks.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

In these arguments applicant relies on amended claims and not the original ones.

See above rejections for response to the arguments.

Claims must be given the broadest reasonable interpretation during examination and limitations appearing in the specification but not recited in the claim are not read into the claim (See M.P.E.P. 2111 [R-I]).

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Contact Information

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Usmaan Saeed whose telephone number is (571)272-4046. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8-5.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Hosain Alam can be reached on (571)272-3978. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Usmaan Saeed
Patent Examiner
Art Unit: 2166



Hosain Alam
Supervisory Patent Examiner

US
January 5, 2008